

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

On page 1, insert above line 1, insert--Priority Claim

The present application claims priority on European Patent Application 03252655.0 filed April 25, 2003.--

On page 1, above line 1, insert--Field of the Invention--

Paragraph on line 1 of page 1 has been amended as follows:

-- The present invention relates to an expander system for radially expanding a tubular element from a first inner diameter to a second inner diameter larger than the first inner diameter. ~~Expansion of tubular elements finds increasing use in the industry of hydrocarbon fluid production from an earth formation, whereby boreholes are drilled to provide a conduit for hydrocarbon fluid flowing from a reservoir zone to a production facility to surface. Conventionally such borehole is provided with several tubular casing sections during drilling of the borehole. Since each subsequent casing section must pass through a previously installed casing section, the different casing section are of decreasing diameter in downward direction which leads to the well-know nested arrangement of casing sections. Thus the available diameter for the production of hydrocarbon fluid decreases with depth. This can lead to technical and / or economical drawbacks, especially for deep wells where a relatively large number of separate casing sections is to be installed.~~

On page 1, above line 21, insert--Background of the Invention

Expansion of tubular elements finds increasing use in the industry of hydrocarbon fluid production from an earth formation, whereby boreholes are drilled to provide a conduit for hydrocarbon fluid flowing from a reservoir zone to a production facility to surface. Conventionally such borehole is provided with several tubular casing sections during drilling of the borehole. Since each subsequent casing section must pass through a previously installed casing section, the different casing section are of decreasing diameter in downward direction which leads to the well-know nested arrangement of casing sections. Thus the available diameter for the production of hydrocarbon fluid decreases with depth. This can lead to technical and / or economical drawbacks, especially for deep wells where a relatively large number of separate casing sections is to be installed.--

Paragraph on line 8 of page 2 has been amended as follows:

--EP-0643794-A discloses a system for expanding a tubular element using a tool movable between a radially retracted mode and a radially expanded mode. The tubular element is expanded in cycles whereby in each cycle the tool is positioned in a portion of the tubular element whereby the tool is in the retracted mode, and whereby subsequently the tool is expanded thereby expanding said tubular element portion. Next the tool is to be repositioned accurately in the tubular element before the expansion cycle can be repeated. Such accurate repositioning of the tool is difficult and time consuming.--

On page 2, delete line 20-22.

On page 2, above line 23, insert--Summary of the Invention--

Paragraph on line 23 of page 2 has been amended as follows:

--In accordance with the invention there is provided The present inventions include an expander system for radially expanding a tubular element having an unexpanded portion of a first inner diameter, the expander system including an expander movable between a radially retracted mode and a radially expanded mode, the expander being operable to expand the tubular element from said first inner diameter to a second inner diameter larger than the first inner diameter by movement of the expander from the radially retracted mode to the radially expanded mode thereof, wherein the expander comprises a contact section of a diameter larger than said first inner diameter when the expander is in the radially retracted mode, and wherein said contact section is arranged to prevent axial movement of the expander through the unexpanded portion of the tubular element when the expander is in the radially retracted mode.--

On page 3, delete line 7-32.

On page 4, delete line 1-32.

On page 5, delete line 1-5.

On page 5, above line 6, insert--Brief Description of the Drawings--

On page 6, above line 1, insert--Detailed Description of the Invention--

On page 6, above line 3, insert the following paragraphs:

--The term "unexpanded portion" of the tubular element is intended to refer to a portion of the tubular element which is to be expanded to a larger diameter. Thus it is to be understood that such "unexpanded portion" can be a portion which has not yet been subjected to expansion before or to a portion which has already been subjected to expansion.

With the expander system of the invention it is achieved that the expander may no longer need to be accurately repositioned after each expansion cycle. By simply exerting an axial force of moderate magnitude to the expander (when in the retracted mode) in the direction in which expansion of the tubular element is progressing, the expander moves forward until the contact section contacts the inner surface of the tubular element. The expander thereby becomes automatically repositioned to perform the next expansion cycle.

Such axial force of moderate magnitude is suitably provided by the weight of the expander, by a pulling string connected to the expander, or by any other suitable means connected to the expander, such as a tractor, a weight element or a drill string. Also drag from a fluid stream passing along the expander, or jet-action from a stream of fluid jetted from the expander during movement to the retracted mode thereof, can provide sufficient force to move the expander forward.

Preferably the expander includes an expansion surface extending in axial direction and being operable to move radially outward so as to expand the tubular element during movement of the expander from the retracted mode to the expanded mode thereof, said expansion surface being of varying diameter in axial direction.

Suitably the contact section has an outer surface coinciding with the expansion surface.

The diameter of the expansion surface preferably increases continuously in axial direction. For example, the expansion surface can be a tapering surface, a frustoconical surface, a convex surface, or a stepwise tapered or convex surface.

To ensure that the tubular element is expanded in a uniform manner it is preferred that the expansion surface is arranged to move radially outward in substantially

uniform manner along the length thereof during movement of the expander from the retracted node to the expanded mode thereof.

In a preferred embodiment the expander comprises an expander body including a plurality of body segments spaced along the circumference of the expander body, each segment extending in longitudinal direction of the expander and being movable between a radially retracted position and a radially expanded position.

The expander body is suitable provided with a plurality of longitudinal slots spaced along the circumference of the expander body, each said slot extending between a pair of adjacent body segments. Each body segment is, for example, at both ends thereof integrally formed with the expander body.

The expander body is preferably a tubular expander body, and the actuating means includes an inflatable member arranged within the tubular expander body so as to move each body segment radially outward upon inflation of the inflatable member.--

On page 16, delete line 6-24.

On page 17, above line 1, insert --We claim:--